

ANIMAL ARK



Guinea Pig Superstar

Lucy Daniels



With special thanks to Tabitha Jones. For Bel.

Illustrations by Jo Anne Davies for Artful Doodlers

ORCHARD BOOKS

First published in Great Britain in 2019 by The Watts Publishing Group

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Text copyright © Working Partners, 2019

Illustrations copyright © Working Partners, 2019

The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted.

All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 40835 410 0

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

The paper and board used in this book are made from wood from responsible sources.



Orchard Books
An imprint of
Hachette Children's Group
Part of The Watts Publishing Group Limited
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London EC4Y 0DZ

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk
www.hachettechildrens.co.uk

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – Page 7

CHAPTER TWO – Page 21

CHAPTER THREE – Page 35

CHAPTER FOUR – Page 47

CHAPTER FIVE – Page 59

CHAPTER SIX – Page 71

CHAPTER SEVEN – Page 81

CHAPTER EIGHT – Page 99





“I’ve found another one!” called Amelia. She lifted a smooth brown egg from a clump of grass and held it up to show Sam and Dervla.

“I’ve got one too!” Amelia’s best friend Sam cried, his arm down the side of the chicken coop. “It’s tricky to reach!”

He let out a grunt, stretching further.

“Got it!” he called, easing himself up.

“Pop them in here with the rest,”

Dervla said, holding out her basket. It was already more than half full.



Sam and Amelia had volunteered to help Dervla – a friend of Amelia’s grandmother – collect the morning’s eggs. Amelia hadn’t expected it to be quite so much like an Easter egg hunt! A few of Dervla’s hens had laid eggs in the nest boxes inside their wooden coop, but most seemed to prefer just about anywhere else. They’d even found an egg in a wheelbarrow!

As Amelia headed towards Dervla, plump chickens bobbed out of her way, clucking and cooing to each other as they went. Amelia noticed one little chicken, speckled and fluffy, standing by her foot. It gazed up at her with its head

cocked and a hopeful look in its eye.

“Sorry,” Amelia said. “I haven’t got any food for you.” The hen stepped closer, nudging her leg with its head.



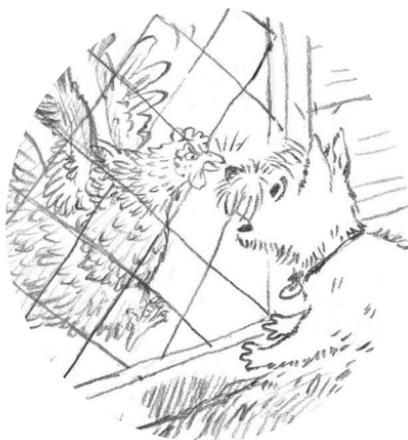
“Ava likes people,” Dervla said. “Try stroking her.”

Amelia crouched and ran her hand over Ava’s soft feathers. The hen let out a rumble of contented little clucks.

“Cool,” Sam said. He bent to stroke a plump brown chicken, but it pecked at his fingers. “Ouch! I guess that one isn’t so friendly!” he said, rubbing his hand.

Outside the hen enclosure, Sam's shaggy white Westie pup, Mac, snuffled at the wire fence, his ears flat to his head and his stumpy tail wagging.

SQUAWK! The fat hen that had pecked Sam flapped towards the little dog, clucking angrily. She pecked at Mac's nose through the fence, making him leap back with a yelp.



Dervla let out a chuckle, her blue eyes glinting. “He’s wise to keep his distance,” she said. “The hens all have their own personalities.



Some are friendly, like Ava, but old Magda here's a bit of a battle-axe. Now, how many eggs did your mum want, Sam?"

"Twelve, please," he answered, digging in his pocket for the money. His parents owned a local bed and breakfast and bought Dervla's eggs for their customers' breakfasts.

As Dervla placed a dozen eggs in a cardboard box, Amelia watched the hens, trying to imagine what they might be saying to each other. They mostly kept together, pecking at the ground. But a few hens, mainly small speckled ones that Amelia hadn't





noticed before, kept their distance from the rest of the flock.

“Do you have some new chickens, Dervla?” Amelia asked.

Dervla grinned. “Well spotted! A dozen arrived the day before yesterday from a local egg factory that is shutting down. It’s a good thing too.” Her eyes turned unusually stern. “They were treated horribly there, cooped up in tiny spaces with no real sunlight. They’re much better off here.” She sighed. “I only wish I could have adopted more. There are plenty left at the rehoming centre, but I’ve got my hands full with this lot.”



As if to prove her right, a racket of screeching and flapping erupted at her feet. “Oh dear!” Dervla said. “Magda’s started another fight.”

Amelia and Sam rushed at the hens, waving their arms. Most scattered, but Magda held her ground, jabbing her beak at a scrappy speckled bird. The smaller hen tried pecking back, but Magda flapped upwards, clucking and swiping with sharp claws.

“Hey! Stop that!” Sam cried, putting his arm between the two birds. The smaller chicken turned tail to scramble away, but Magda chased after it. *Oh!* Amelia noticed something which made



her heart squeeze. The fleshy red comb on the smaller bird's head was torn and bleeding.

Amelia pushed Magda firmly away and scooped the speckled bird into her arms. The injured hen barely seemed to weigh anything at all, and its body was strangely stiff beneath its feathers.

“Look, she’s hurt!” Amelia said, showing the torn, red frill on the bird’s head to Sam and Dervla.

“Poor thing!” Sam said.

Dervla shook her head sadly. “It’s never easy for new hens joining a flock,” she said. “Chickens like to have a pecking order – it’s a kind of ranking system that decides who gets the best food, and who’s the boss. Magda’s in charge and she’s decided that these new hens aren’t welcome here at all. Poor Lola here seems to be taking the brunt of her fury.” Dervla gently touched the speckled bird’s torn comb. Lola let out a low, grumbling sound. “Ooh! That does

look sore,” Dervla said.

“I think we’d better take her to Animal Ark.”

Even though she was worried about Lola, Amelia shared an excited look with Sam. They had



both recently become official helpers at Animal Ark, the local veterinary surgery.

“We’ll come with you!” Amelia said.

“We can look after Lola on the way!” Sam chimed in.

Dervla smiled. “That would be a great

help.” She turned to her hens with a comical frown and shook her fist. “You ladies be nice while I’m gone!” she said. “Especially you, Magda!” But Magda was too busy gobbling up seeds and nudging her fellow hens out of her way to pay any attention to Dervla.

Amelia gently placed Lola in a plastic crate. The poor chicken huddled inside, her head drawn back into her body. Amelia placed the crate on the middle seat of Dervla’s jeep, then hopped in beside it. Sam piled in on the other side with the box of eggs, while Mac curled up in the footwell. As the car started off, Lola let out sad little peeps. Amelia



put her hand on the top of the crate,
steadyng it as best she could.

I really hope Lola will be OK! Amelia
thought.



